



NEWSBREAK

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What's New?

A Guide to Implementation: Resources for Applied Practices

CECR is pleased to announce the release of the first five modules of the *Guide to Implementation: Resources for Applied Practice*. This user-friendly guide tackles pressing issues in designing and implementing pay-for-performance programs. Authored by field experts, each module outlines a topic, discusses challenges, and offers practical suggestions. Subject experts can use this guide as a refresher and discussion-starter, whereas newcomers may want to use it as an introduction to pay-for-performance. In the coming months, CECR will release other modules in this series, including value-added research, performance programs for principals, and designing and paying for new programs.

The following five modules are currently available on the CECR website:

[Educator Compensation Reform Implementation Checklist](#). Identify key areas of concern when planning an alternative compensation program.

[Stakeholder Engagement and Communication](#). Establish a strong foundation for a new program by engaging key stakeholders early in the planning process.

[Observations of Teachers' Classroom Performance](#). Learn the complexities of a comprehensive observation system and the advantages of introducing classroom observation as a measure of teacher performance.

[Information Technology Considerations](#). Consider the complexities of linking multiple data systems—human resources, student information, grading—to design a functional information system that meets program needs.

[Data Quality Essentials](#). Identify, address, and plan for data-quality problems before making performance pay decisions.

Hot Off the Press

[Ralston Board Approves Pay-for-Performance Proposal](#)—*Omaha World-Herald*, January 28, 2008

Omaha-area school board approves plan linking salary raises to principal, assistant principal, and director performance evaluations.

[Lawmaker Works on Merit Pay for Teachers](#)—*The Columbia Tribune*, January 12, 2008

State Representative Ed Robb is developing a new bill allowing districts to offer teachers performance-based incentives as well as incentives for teaching in shortage areas.

[Districts to Decide Teacher Incentives](#)—*The Tennessean*, January 5, 2008

State-mandated bonus program guidelines allow districts to determine criteria for teacher bonuses.

[Year Two Evaluation of the Achievement Challenge Pilot Project in the Little Rock Public School District](#)—Department of Education Reform, University of Arkansas, January 22, 2008

Second-year district evaluation merit pay program was implemented in five elementary schools in the 2006–07 school year.

Grantee Spotlight: Dallas Independent School District

The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant expands the district's existing Outstanding School Performance Awards incentive program by placing an emphasis on individual teachers and principals who raise students' achievement. The TIF-funded rewards are currently being piloted at 59 schools (which Texas refers to as *campuses*) with the plan to implement districtwide in the 2008–09 school year. These rewards link bonus decisions primarily to various measures of student achievement on norm-referenced (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), criterion-referenced (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills), and end-of-course assessments. Additional measures are included at the campus level, such as attendance, promotion, dropout rate, graduation rate, percentage of students taking PSAT/SAT/ACT/AP examinations, and their performance on the exams.

What need is the project trying to address?

The Dallas ISD TIF grant aspires to attract, retain, and reward effective teachers and principals in a high-needs district. According to the Dallas ISD TIF proposal, 214 of the district's 220 campuses in which at least 30 percent of the students come from low-income families were designated as "high-need." Specifically, 83 percent of the district's 161,244 students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch during the 2005–06 school year, and nearly 30 percent of students had limited English proficiency.

TIF grant funds also address the need for high-quality teaching. Despite improved state assessment performance, many campuses are not on track to meet NCLB goals for 2014. For example, from 2005 to 2006, Dallas ISD reported increased proficiency scores on the Texas

Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) for all students in reading, mathematics, writing, and science assessments. Proficiency rates for social science during the same time period remained virtually unchanged. On the other hand, only 21 percent of Dallas ISD high schools met AYP requirements in 2006, and 54 percent of high schools failed to meet AYP requirements for three consecutive years. In addition, in 2007–08, 34 percent of high schools met AYP requirements, and 52 percent failed to meet AYP requirements for three consecutive years.

What are the goals of the project?

The goal of the Dallas ISD performance pay program is to recruit, retain, and reward effective educators in underperforming campuses. The current program rewards the top 40 percent of teachers based on district-designed classroom effectiveness indices, as well as all campus staff in the top 40 percent of the campuses for growth in their student performance. The district aims to attract and retain high-quality teachers through effective principal leadership in the schools.

How much are the incentives?

The TIF grant will be used to create three incentive models for principals and teachers:

Principals Performance Pay Model. Principals are eligible for bonuses based on a principal incentive rating. This figure is a weighted average of indicators of student performance. These indicators include the following:

- *State Accountability Rating (20 percent of rating).* Measures campus performance on state-mandated subject tests in Grades 3–11.
- *School Effectiveness Index (20 percent of rating).* Value-added measures of student growth on district/state and criterion- and norm-referenced tests in Grades 1–11, as well as improvement on other school variables affecting achievement.
- *TAKS Met Standard (25 percent of rating).* Percentage of student groups meeting or having at least 90 percent of students meeting TAKS test standards.
- *TAKS Commended Level (10 percent of rating).* Percentage of student groups meeting commended performance targets or having at least 50 percent of students with TAKS scale scores of at least 2400.
- *Graduation and On-Track Rates (25 percent of rating).* Percentage of student groups meeting annual performance targets, or at least 93 percent graduation rate, or at least 90 percent meeting standard.

Principals who receive a rating of four or five are eligible for bonuses—\$7,500 and \$10,000 respectively. All principals who earn a bonus are also eligible for raises approved by the board of education. Principals in campuses that do not meet AYP requirements are not eligible for principal incentive rating bonuses. Principals are eligible for bonuses for working in and improving instruction at high-needs campuses.

High-Needs School Incentive for Principals. To fill an administrative vacancy at a high-needs campus, candidates must show measurable evidence of being highly effective as a principal or other campus administrator in prior years. In subsequent years, principals will continue to

receive high-needs incentives if the campus shows growth in student performance. If the high-needs designation is removed, the principal will continue to receive a stipend as long the campus continues to show strong student performance and there has been no decline in federal or state accountability. The incentive amount of \$10,000 is paid in two equal payments early each semester to allow time for verification and to promote retention.

Teacher Performance Pay Model. In November 2007, Dallas ISD adopted a performance pay program for teachers in which incentives are based on the following:

- Assignment to high-needs campus (\$6,000).
- Student performance measured at the classroom and campus levels under the district's value-added accountability system (\$2,000 to \$10,000).
- Campus leadership roles (\$1,000 to \$7,000).

Additional components to the Dallas performance pay program, to be presented to the board in spring 2008, include teacher incentives for professional development and demonstration of skills or objective/goal setting. If approved, teachers could receive bonuses of \$1,000 for each additional teaching certification in a critical area. Dallas teachers also can receive a \$3,000 bonus for completing a nationally recognized teacher certification program such as that offered through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

Both principal and teacher performance pay models include professional opportunities designed to support teaching and leadership needs in the district. All district administrators receive training through the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning program that focuses on developing skills to support higher achievement in diverse student populations. Teachers' mandatory training requirements are based on subject, grade, and tier. This structure addresses differences in the levels of teacher expertise and offers a diversified menu of training opportunities over a three-year period based on years of experience, teacher success, and effectiveness.

What are the strengths of the project?

TIF grant funds, along with matching district, state, and other funding, will be used to enhance program capabilities in the following ways:

- Encouraging inclusion and transparent communication among stakeholders groups.
- Improving databases to accurately reflect teacher and student assignments.
- Developing a Web-based system to track eligibility and communicate up-to-date information about the performance pay program to various stakeholders.
- Enhancing internal and external program evaluation capabilities. The Dallas value-added methodology is being reviewed by the Value-Added Research Center at the University of Wisconsin. In addition, an independent consultant will be used to evaluate the performance pay program once it is established.
- Developing rigorous evaluation instruments to assess teacher and principal effectiveness.

- Enhancing professional development opportunities for teachers and principals.

What are the challenges of the project?

The challenges faced by Dallas ISD include communication and funding. Communicating the value-added methodologies continues to be an issue. Many teachers would prefer to have their performance targets clearly defined at the beginning of the school year; however, that is not possible because the current value-added model sets expectations for the students based on the performance of similar students for that year.

The district has worked on communication in the following ways:

- Using district staff to provide presentations at campuses.
- Producing and distributing a promotional DVD for all eligible teachers.
- Sending brochures to each teacher and school staff member.
- Making phone calls to each teacher.

As with many performance pay programs, permanent funding sources to continue the performance pay program have not been identified. In order for the program to be sustainable into the future, alternative sources still need to be found.

Contact Us

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The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) was awarded to Westat—in partnership with Learning Point Associates, Synergy Enterprises Inc., Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin—by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2006.

The primary purpose of CECR is to support the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees with their implementation efforts through the provision of ongoing technical assistance and the development and dissemination of timely resources. CECR also is charged with raising national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation through this newsletter, a Web-based clearinghouse, and other outreach activities. We look forward to an exciting partnership with the TIF grantees as we embark together on blazing a new path for education reform.

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